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NATURAL PROGRESSION

Land at Hornbrook Farm, Brighton Road, Horsham

**Great Crested Newt & Otter / Water Vole Survey
Report**

February 2026

Land at Hornbrook Farm, Brighton Road, Horsham

Great Crested Newt & Otter / Water Vole Survey Report

Client:	Jaynic Properties Ltd	
Report No.:	UE0470_HornbrookFarm_GCNOtterWV_1_260224	
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Revision No.:	Status / Comment:	Date:
0	First issue to client	23 January 2026
1	Amended proposals	24 February 2026
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Abbreviations

ECoW	Ecological Clerk of Works
GCN	Great Crested Newt
HSI	Habitat Suitability Index
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
PEA	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

0 Executive Summary

0.1 Introduction

- 0.1.1 Protected species surveys for great crested newt and otter / water vole were undertaken for the site of a proposed residential development at Land at Hornbrook Farm, Brighton Road, Horsham. The study was undertaken to identify and evaluate the importance of great crested newt and otter / water vole.

0.2 Results

- 0.2.1 Two ponds identified within 500m of the survey area boundary were subject to eDNA sampling for great crested newts. Both ponds P2 and P5 returned a negative survey result.
- 0.2.2 No evidence of otter was found during the otter surveys. However, two instances of suspected otter commuting along Horn Brook were noted on a remote camera during the [REDACTED] surveys. Two mammal burrows adjacent to one another which resembled that of water vole, were located along the western end of Horn Brook. However, no other evidence of water vole was found.

0.3 Evaluation

- 0.3.1 It is considered likely that great crested newts are absent from the survey area. This is due to the negative result for great crested newt eDNA in suitable ponds located within 500m of the survey area, and the lack of suitability, distance or isolation from the survey area of other ponds located within 500m. The survey area is considered to be of Negligible Importance for great crested newt and no impacts to this species are anticipated.
- 0.3.2 Despite the sighting of otter during the [REDACTED] surveys, it is unlikely that otter breed within the survey area or permanently reside within it, as no evidence of otter was found during the otter surveys. The survey area is therefore considered to be of Negligible Importance for otter and no impacts to this species are anticipated.
- 0.3.3 Potential water vole burrows were located along the western end of Horn Brook and the watercourse provided sub-optimal habitat. With no further evidence found, the survey area has been assessed to be of Negligible Importance for water vole. Potential impacts will be avoided carrying out an inspection of the works area prior to commencement and by implementing a fenced buffer zone of at least 10m from the remainder of the southern bank of Horn Brook. Within the buffer zone construction activities and access by site personnel and machinery should be prohibited and enforced through appropriate fencing and signage.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1.1 Protected species surveys for great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* and otter *Lutra lutra* / water vole *Arvicola amphibius* were undertaken for the site of a proposed residential development at Land at Hornbrook Farm, Brighton Road, Horsham (Grid Reference: TQ 18906 29780). The purpose of the study was to identify the presence and evaluate the importance of GCN and otter / water vole populations.

1.2 Objectives and Approach of the Study

- 1.2.1 The study was commissioned to fulfil the following objectives:
- ▶ To determine the presence or likely absence of GCN and otter / water vole, and if present record their distribution within the survey area; and
 - ▶ To identify and evaluate the importance of GCN and otter / water vole.
- 1.2.2 To meet these objectives the survey approach involved field surveys using standard techniques to record the presence, distribution and relative abundance of target species within the survey area, with reference to current industry guidelines.

1.3 Survey Area

- 1.3.1 The survey area is larger than the Application Site boundary, due to a change in the size of the Application Site after the surveys had been completed. The majority of the survey area contains the Application Site, barring a linear strip of habitat on the south-eastern boundary, within which a visibility splay will be created. The Application Site measures c.9.23ha and its extent is shown in blue on Figure 1.1.
- 1.3.2 The survey area lies to the south-east of the town of Horsham in the Horsham District of West Sussex. It comprised c.10.25ha of undeveloped agricultural land, with open grassland fields interspersed by hedgerows. With strips of woodland and Horn Brook located along the survey area boundaries, and occasional patches of tall ruderal, bracken and scrub. The extent of the survey area is shown in red on Figure 1.1.
- 1.3.3 The survey area was bound by Horn Brook and woodland to the north and west, Doomsday Lane to the east and Brighton road (A281) to the south. The wider landscape was dominated by farmland and housing associated with Horsham, with large blocks of woodland to the east. Six ponds lay within 500m of the survey area.

1.4 Proposed Development

1.4.1 Planning consent is being sought for a residential development. The proposals would include construction of up to 180 dwellings, open space and associated works and infrastructure with all matters reserved apart from access. The Illustrative Masterplan is shown in Figure 1.2.

Hornbrook Farm, Horsham, West Sussex

-  Survey area
-  Application Site

Figure 1.1: Survey area



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Ordnance Survey AC0000808122

Scale (at A4): 1:5,000 Created by: EM

Date: Jan 2026 Reviewed by: NP

Drawing number:

UE0470ECO-Hornbrook: Site location: 260119





Figure 1.2: Illustrative Masterplan

2 Survey Methodology

2.1 Great crested newt

2.1.1 A GCN survey was undertaken in line with standard industry techniques as recommended by English Nature (2001) and Froglife (2001), as well as Natural England's standing advice¹ for GCN, comprising:

- ▶ Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment; and
- ▶ eDNA surveys.

2.1.2 Access to the ponds located within 500m of the survey area was requested to carry out Habitat Suitability Assessments and eDNA surveys. Permission was granted to survey ponds P2 and P5, with the remaining ponds (P1, P3, P4 and P6) scoped out (see 2.1.15). See Appendix II for a pond plan.

Habitat suitability assessment

2.1.3 The HSI (Oldham *et al.*, 2000) is a tool used to assess ponds on the basis of their suitability to support breeding GCN. The HSI incorporates ten suitability indices which are considered to affect GCN distribution. These are:

- ▶ Location (in Britain);
- ▶ Pond area;
- ▶ Desiccation rate (years out of ten that pond dries);
- ▶ Water quality (subjective assessment);
- ▶ Percentage of pond shaded (% of pond margin shaded 1m from the bank);
- ▶ Number of waterfowl;
- ▶ Fish population (subjective assessment);
- ▶ Density of ponds within 1km;
- ▶ Terrestrial habitat quality; and
- ▶ Percentage macrophyte cover.

2.1.4 The results of the HSI calculation can be compared to categorised HSI scores used by the National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme (Oldham *et al.*, 2000) to identify the probability of a pond supporting GCN. The five categories are summarised in Table 2.1.

¹ Natural England (2015): *Great crested newts: surveys and mitigation for development projects*. Accessed online at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/great-crested-newts-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects>

Table 2.1: HSI categories

Habitat Quality	HSI Score
Poor	Below 0.5
Below Average	0.5 – 0.59
Average	0.6 – 0.69
Good	0.7 – 0.79
Exceptional	Above 0.8

- 2.1.5 The HSI gives an indication of whether a pond is suitable for breeding GCN, however, it should be noted that a low score does not preclude the possibility that GCN are using the pond. A survey of ponds carried out to test the HSI (ARG UK, 2010) found that 20% of ponds which were scored as 'below average' still contained GCN, although this increased to an occupation rate of 93% for those ponds scored as 'excellent'. Another important consideration when using the HSI is that pond scores can vary at different times of year, for example, if emergent vegetation is not present (and therefore under recorded) at the time of the HSI assessment.

eDNA survey

- 2.1.6 The objective of the survey was to establish the presence or likely absence of GCN from potentially suitable breeding ponds. The eDNA water sampling followed the methodology set out in Natural England's '*Technical advice note for field and laboratory sampling of GCN environmental DNA*' (Biggs et al., 2014), which is provided as an appendix of the research report published by Defra into environmental DNA testing for GCN. This is the only methodology currently accepted by Natural England for this technique.
- 2.1.7 A single visit to the ponds was made on 15 April 2025. At the time of the survey, the following information was collected for the ponds:
- ▶ Site name;
 - ▶ Nearest settlement;
 - ▶ County;
 - ▶ Time between receipt of sampling kit and date of sampling;
 - ▶ Date of sampling;
 - ▶ Personnel collecting sample;
 - ▶ Ordnance Survey grid reference (12 figures);
 - ▶ Percentage of pond perimeter that is accessible for survey;
 - ▶ Data on inflows, and whether these were wet or dry at the time of survey;
 - ▶ Data on presence and number of GCNs recorded during the survey (if any); and
 - ▶ Information on any difficulties experienced during sample collection.

2.1.8 The following methodology for the sampling procedure for eDNA analysis was applied in the field in accordance with the survey protocol (Biggs *et al.*, 2014):

- ▶ During the survey, 20 samples of 30ml each were taken from around the perimeter of the pond, as equally spaced as possible. The locations of the samples were chosen to sample the entire margin with specific effort made to target areas where there may be newt egg laying and / or displaying activities.
- ▶ The sample ladle was stirred gently in the pond before the sample was retrieved in order to mix the water column, with care being taken not to stir up the sediment.
- ▶ All 20 samples were emptied as they were collected into a Whirl-Pack bag, which was then sealed and shaken for 10 seconds to mix the samples.
- ▶ Upon mixing, and using a sterile pipette, exactly 15ml of the sample was transferred from the Whirl-Pack bag into each of the six sterile tubes, which contained 35ml of ethanol. The sample was stirred between filling each tube to homogenize the water.
- ▶ Once filled to 50ml, each tube was mixed for 10 seconds to mix the sample and preservative Date of sampling.
- ▶ Samples were returned to the office and either dispatched at ambient temperature immediately for analysis or stored at 2-4°C in a refrigerator dedicated for this purpose.

2.1.9 The following precautions were adhered to, which ensured that no cross-contamination of samples occurred:

- ▶ Sterile gloves were worn by all surveyors at all times during the sampling process; and
- ▶ Samples were collected without the surveyor entering the water (i.e. the surveyors stood on the pond bank or edge).

2.1.10 The laboratory used for analysis of the samples was SureScreen Scientifics Division Ltd, Morley Retreat, Church Lane, Morley, Derbyshire, DE7 6DE, which is participating in Natural England's proficiency testing scheme. Water samples were stored in refrigerated conditions and returned to the laboratory on 16 April 2025 via a 24hr courier service.

Evaluation criteria

2.1.11 A positive result means that GCNs are present in the water or have been present in the water in the recent past (eDNA degrades over around 7-21 days).

2.1.12 A negative result means that GCN DNA was not detected and GCN are likely to be absent from the waterbody.

2.1.13 On rare occasions an inconclusive result is issued. This occurs where GCN DNA has not been detected but the controls have indicated that the sample has been degraded or the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) inhibited in some way. This may be due to undefined components in the water chemistry or may be due to the presence of high levels of sediment or algae in the sample. A re-test could be performed but a fresh sample would need to be obtained, and if water

chemistry was the cause of the indeterminate then a re-test would most likely also return an inconclusive result.

- 2.1.14 Sediment content of each sample is visually recorded in the lab and reported on the results document. Inhibition and degradation results are also noted. If the result is recorded as evidence of decay (meaning that the degradation control was outside of accepted limits) or evidence of residual inhibition (meaning that the PCR reaction was inhibited) any negative result is recorded as indeterminate.

Limitations

- 2.1.15 There were no difficulties in gaining access to suitable ponds P2 and P5 to carry out the eDNA surveys. Ponds P1, P3, P4 and P6 were scoped out from the assessment, as described in the PEA (Preliminary Ecological Assessment; UEEC, 2021) and Protected Species Report (UEEC, 2026a).

2.2 Otter / water vole

- 2.2.1 A presence / likely absence survey for otter and water vole was carried out, based on standard industry guidelines (Chanin, 2003; Dean *et al.*, 2016) and Natural England's standing advice for otter² and water vole³, combining a habitat suitability assessment and field sign surveys.

Field signs surveys

- 2.2.2 Field sign surveys comprised a detailed investigation of all suitable areas of riparian habitat to record evidence of otter or water vole activity within or close to the site. The survey covered the full length of the banks (subject to safe access) of Horn Brook, which ran adjacent to the northern boundary of the survey area. This extended at least 2m from the water when looking for water vole signs and at least 10m of adjacent riparian habitat when looking for otter. The survey area also extended up to approximately 200m east of the site boundary (subject to safe access) to enable consideration of the abundance and distribution of otter and water vole in the wider area during impact assessment and mitigation planning. No access was possible in the western, off-site portion of the brook.

Otter

- 2.2.3 Otter surveys can be conducted year-round, but the optimal survey period is springtime, after winter water levels subside and before for vegetation regrowth becomes too vigorous. Surveyors searched for characteristic signs of otter activity, including:
- ▶ **Spraints:** Otters communicate to each other by marking or 'sprainting' with small droppings along a watercourse at waypoint features such as fallen trees, boulders, prominent grass tussocks and bridge supports. Fresh spraints can appear as a black, spiky cylinder coated in mucus, 2-8cm long and 1-5cm in diameter. Spraints have a sweet odour

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/otters-protection-surveys-and-licences>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/water-voles-protection-surveys-and-licences>

and scales, bones and sometimes feathers are often visible. Weathered spraints are grey with the scales and bones appearing ashy.

- ▶ **Tracks / footprints:** Otter tracks have a characteristic pattern; they are approximately 4-8cm long with five rounded toe prints. Otters often follow a habitual route so tracks can be evident on repeat visits. The tail drag is sometimes visible in an otter trail.
- ▶ **Runways and slides:** Runways are trampled pathways, approximately 30cm wide on river banks and reedbeds. Runways may go down a bank to form a slide, leaving twists in the vegetation and/or smoothed mud and substrate.
- ▶ **Holts:** Usually a secure underground resting site and particularly significant when used for and cub raising. Often located next to a watercourse under boulders or fallen trees but can also be found away from the water in adjacent habitats. Those close to the water's edge, although affording underground security, are only generally used for resting purposes. Breeding dens are rarely aside flowing main rivers being usually away from sources of flooding. Females appear to favour these for most of their resting sites.
- ▶ **Couches:** Similar to holts but are found above ground and are used temporarily. Couches are frequently located in dense vegetation or natural cavities formed by bankside trees.

Water vole

- 2.2.4 The optimal survey period for water vole is on each side of the breeding season, (one survey in mid-April, May or June with another carried out in September or August as populations tend to reach their peak. Surveyors searched for characteristic signs of water vole activity, including:

- ▶ **Droppings and Latrines:** Droppings are the most distinctive field sign, approximately 8-12mm in length often with a blunt end. They are usually found accumulated at latrine sites, close to the water's edge, near the nest or at the boundaries of territories. These are marked with scent from the lateral flank glands when deposited and drummed-down with the hind feet, so often resemble a flattened pile of old droppings with fresh on top.
- ▶ **Feeding stations:** These are piles of neat, chewed vegetation found along water vole pathways within vegetation or at the edge of the water. The sections are typically 10cm long with the chewed ends being at approximately 45° and often showing the marks of the two large incisors.
- ▶ **Burrows and nests:** As many animals and birds will construct holes in the riverbank, burrows found on their own cannot be regarded as conclusive evidence of water vole presence. Water vole burrow entrances are typically taller than they are wide; with a diameter of 4-8cm. Burrows away from the water can also sometimes have grazed 'lawns' surrounding them, where the vegetation has been grazed within easy reach of the entrance. Most nests are created underground within burrows. However, in areas of fen and rush pasture nests may sometimes be woven and found within tussocks.
- ▶ **Footprints:** As with all rodents, water vole footprints show variation between the fore and hind feet. Fore-foot prints show four toes which are splayed in a star-like arrangement. Hind-foot prints show five toes with the outer toes on either side being at right angles to the middle three. However, as there is again significant overlap with the prints of other

species, (for example with juvenile brown rats), footprints may not be conclusive without the presence of other field signs.

- ▶ **Runways:** Most often found within 2m of the water's edge, these take the form of low tunnels (c.5-9cm width) pushed through the vegetation, often branched many times, and leading between the water, burrows and favoured feeding areas.

2.2.5 The location, type and approximate extent of each field sign was recorded using GPS coordinates. Weather conditions were noted during each survey (air temperature, wind speed, precipitation and cloud cover) and are reported in Table 2.2. Field signs of key predators (e.g., mink *Neovison vison*, fox *Vulpes vulpes* and cat *Felis catus*) were also noted, if present. A map of the surveyed watercourse, is shown in Appendix V.

Table 2.2: Survey dates and weather conditions of otter / water vole surveys

Date (2025)	Weather conditions
01 May	19-25°C, light air (Beaufort 1), 5% cloud cover, no precipitation
05 September	16-20°C, light breeze (Beaufort 2), 50% cloud cover, no precipitation

Evaluation criteria

- 2.2.6 There are no formally agreed standards for evaluating otter survey results. However, in general terms it is not unreasonable to assume that the greater the abundance of field signs within a stretch of riparian habitat, the more frequently it is used by otter. Resting sites (holts / couches) are features of greater significance, particularly those used as breeding dens.
- 2.2.7 The number of water vole latrine sites recorded during a survey can give an indication of relative abundance and is useful in determining the most valuable parts of a site to water vole. Hence the survey area can be subdivided into areas supporting water vole at high, medium or low density. These relative terms are defined in Table 2.3 (Dean *et al.*, 2016).

Table 2.3: Population density assessment (Dean *et al.*, 2016)

Relative population density	Approximate number of latrines per 100m of bankside habitat	
	1st half of season (mid-Apr to end Jun)	2nd half of season (Jul to Sep)
High	10 or more	20 or more
Medium	3-9	6-19
Low	≤ 2 (or 0, but with other field signs)	≤ 5 (or 0, but with other field signs)

Limitations

- 2.2.8 Access was not possible within any of the section of Horn Brook which ran off-site to the west, due to the high levels of vegetation here. However, the whole length of the brook on-site and a 200m section off-site to the east was surveyed, so this is not considered to be a major limitation.
- 2.2.9 In reference to section 2.2.2, it was not possible to extensively survey the full 10m of riparian habitat north of Horn Brook, due to the presence of residential property and associated gardens.

However, much of the habitat north of Horn Brook was still observable from afar and no signs of otter were noted during the otter surveys, so this is not considered to be a major limitation.

2.3 General limitations

- 2.3.1 See Appendix VII for general Legal and Technical Limitations which apply to this document.
- 2.3.2 The details of this report are valid until the dates shown in Table 2.4. Beyond these periods, if works have not yet been undertaken, the development proposals change or red line boundary changes, it is recommended that a review of the ecological conditions is undertaken.

Table 2.4: Validity of assessment

Survey Type	Validity period (CIEEM, 2019)	Date of final survey	Expiry date
GCN	18 months	15/04/2025	15/10/2026
Otter and water vole	18 months	05/09/2025	05/03/2027

2.4 Personnel

- 2.4.1 The personnel deployed on the surveys are listed in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Survey personnel and qualifications

Feature / Task	Personnel
GCN	Joel Cronin, Elliot Martin
Otter and water vole	Joe Dale, Zoe Benefer
Personnel	Qualifications
Joel Cronin BSc (Hons) MSc ACIEEM	Senior Ecologist with seven years' experience in ecological consultancy. Licence to survey for great crested newt (WML-CL08).
Joe Dale BSc (Hons) MSc Qualifying member of CIEEM	Consultant Ecologist with three years' professional consultancy experience.
Zoe Benefer BSc (Hons) MSc Qualifying member of CIEEM	Assistant Ecologist with two years' survey experience. Licence to survey for great crested newt (WML-CL09).
Elliot Martin BA (Hons) MSc	Assistant Ecologist with experience in ecological surveying, and environmental management.

3 Results

3.1 Great crested newt

Habitat suitability assessment

- 3.1.1 Pond P5 achieved an HSI score of “excellent” suitability for breeding GCN and pond P2 achieved an “average” suitability. A summary of these results is shown in Table 3.1, for the full HSI survey results see Appendix III.

Table 3.1: Summary of HSI survey results

Pond	Location	HSI Score	Pond photo
P2	c.100m east of the survey area	<u>Average</u>	
P5	c.300m east of the survey area	<u>Excellent</u>	

eDNA survey

- 3.1.2 The GCN eDNA analysis results letter is presented at Appendix IV and summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Summary of eDNA analysis results

Pond	Result
P2	<u>Negative</u> for GCN DNA
P5	<u>Negative</u> for GCN DNA

3.2 Otter / water vole

- 3.2.1 No resting sites for otters (holts, couches or lying-up sites) were found in areas of scrub and tree cover adjacent to Horn Brook and no field signs (spraints, footprints, pathways, slides or feeding remains) were found along the banks of the brook. However, it is worth noting that during the [REDACTED] monitoring surveys, the suspected tail of an otter was noted passing by close to a sett, on two separate occasions (UEEC, 2026b).
- 3.2.2 No water vole were observed during the surveys and no droppings and latrines, feeding stations or footprints were recorded along the banks of Horn Brook. A number of mammal burrows were noted within the banks of Horn Brook, with the majority of these likely belonging to brown rat *Rattus norvegicus*. However, at least two burrow entrances, adjacent to one another, were of the appropriate size, shape and location on the bank of typical water vole burrows. The riparian habitat in this area was heavily shaded by the surrounding woodland, with ground flora comprised of marginal herbaceous species. Given the lack of any other corroborating evidence, the presence of water vole was not able to be conclusively determined. The location of the potential water vole burrows and other mammal holes, are shown in Appendix V.

4 Evaluation

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 This section evaluates the survey area in terms of the protected species present or potentially present on-site or its immediate vicinity, in the context of relevant legislation and planning policy. See Appendix VI for a review of the legislation and planning context.

4.2 Great crested newt

Presence or absence of great crested newt

- 4.2.1 The two ponds (P2 and P5) considered suitable for GCN within 500m of the survey area, were subject to eDNA testing and both returned a negative result for GCN eDNA. The survey was carried out during the peak sampling season and is considered to provide a good level of confidence in the presence or likely absence of GCN within surveyed ponds.

Site evaluation

- 4.2.2 Overall, habitats within the survey area provided a range of features which could have supported a population of GCN during the terrestrial phase of their lifecycle. The composition of coarse grassland, with a variable sward height and structure was suitable for foraging GCN. The boundary hedgerows and scrub provided shelter and dispersal habitat, while the woodlands on and adjacent to the survey area provided potential hibernation habitat.
- 4.2.3 There are no ponds within the survey area. An additional four ponds (P1, P3, P4, and P6) within 500m of the survey area were scoped out for further assessment during the PEA (UEEC, 2021). P6 consisted of a dry grassed depression, within a recreation ground and ponds P1 and P3 did not provide opportunities for breeding GCN, both being swimming pools inside an installers showroom.
- 4.2.4 Pond P4 was located c.400m south of the survey area. The majority of GCN will remain within a core area of up to c.50–250m from the breeding pond (250m being the estimated maximum routine migratory range; Cresswell & Whitworth, 2004) if that area can fulfil their lifecycle requirements. However, as with all amphibians, small numbers of individuals (often juveniles) will disperse as colonisers to distances of 1km or more (Langton *et al.*, 2001). Research on the efficiency of GCN capture techniques within a range of habitats at various distances from a breeding pond concluded that (Cresswell & Whitworth, 2004):

“The most comprehensive mitigation, in relation to avoiding disturbance, killing or injury is appropriate within approximately 50m of a breeding pond. It will also almost always be necessary actively to capture newts 50-100m away. However, at distances greater than

100m, there should be careful consideration as to whether attempts to capture newts are necessary or the most effective option to avoid incidental mortality... At distances greater than 200-250m, capture operations with hardly ever be appropriate."

- 4.2.5 Additionally, habitats surrounding P4 appeared to be of a similar quality for GCN, to those within the survey area. It is therefore unlikely that GCN, if present within P4, would attempt a significant dispersal distance to reach the survey area when good quality habitat exists around the pond.
- 4.2.6 It is considered likely that GCN are absent from the survey area. This is due to the negative result for GCN eDNA in suitable ponds located within 500m of the survey area, and the lack of suitability, distance or isolation from the survey area of other ponds located within 500m. The survey area is therefore considered to be of Negligible Importance for GCN.

4.3 Otter / water vole

Presence or absence of otter / water vole

- 4.3.1 No otter were observed during the otter surveys and no otter holts or other evidence of otter was recorded along the banks of Horn Brook. Otter were recorded on two separate occasions, during the [REDACTED] survey (UEEC, 2026b)
- 4.3.2 No water vole were observed during the surveys and no droppings and latrines, feeding stations or footprints were recorded along the banks of Horn Brook. A number of burrow entrances were recorded, with the majority likely belonging to brown rat. However, at least two burrow entrances could have belonged to water vole.

Site evaluation

- 4.3.3 The incidental capture of otter during the [REDACTED] surveys combined with the lack of otter evidence found during the otter surveys, suggests that otter may use Horn Brook as a commuting route, but it is unlikely that holts and resting positions are present or that otter permanently reside along the brook. As a consequence, the survey area is considered to be of Negligible Importance for otter.
- 4.3.4 As a result of sub-optimal riparian habitat, the presence of water vole records during the desk study stage of the PEA and potential water vole burrows being located along the banks of Horn Brook, there is a low possibility that water vole are present within the survey area. Accordingly, the survey area is considered to be of Negligible Importance for water vole.

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Appendix I: Phase 1 Habitat Plan

Hornbrook Farm Brighton Road, Horsham West Sussex

-  Survey area
-  Broadleaved woodland
-  Dense scrub
-  SI Neutral semi-improved grassland
-  I Improved grassland
-  SI Poor semi-improved grassland
-  Bracken
-  Bracken/tall ruderal/scrub
-  Tall ruderal
-  Running water
-  Native species-rich hedge
-  Native species- poor hedge
-  Species-poor defunct hedge
-  Native species-rich hedge with trees
-  Native species-poor hedge with trees
-  Scattered tree
-  Tree with bat roost potential
-  Badger sett



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Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Scale: 1:3,000 Created by: AD
Date: Oct 2021 Reviewed by: NP
Drawing number:
UE0470ECO-Phase1_211021



Appendix II: Pond Plan

Hornbrook Farm Brighton Road, Horsham West Sussex

- Survey area
- ▲ Pond numbers
- 100m buffer
- 250m buffer
- 500m buffer



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Ordnance Survey 0100031673

Scale: 1:8,000 Created by: AD
Date: Oct 2021 Reviewed by: NP
Drawing number:
UE0470ECO-Ponds211021



Appendix III: Habitat Suitability Indices

HSI results for all accessible waterbodies potentially suitable for GCN within 500m of the survey area are shown below.

Variable	Field score	SI value	Field score	SI value
	Pond 2		Pond 5	
Location	Zone A	1	Zone A	1
Pond area (m2)	800	0.98	400	0.8
Pond permanence	Never dries	0.9	Never dries	0.9
Water quality	Poor	0.33	Good	1
% shaded 1m from bank	60	1	60	1
Fowl	Minor	0.67	Absent	1
Fish	Possible	0.67	Possible	0.67
Pond density (per km ²)	3.18	0.95	6.68	1
Terrestrial habitat	Poor	0.33	Moderate	0.67
Macrophyte cover %	5	0.3	20	0.5
HSI value		0.65		0.83
Suitability		Average		Excellent

Appendix IV: eDNA Results for Ponds

Folio No:	631-2025	
Purchase Order:	UE0470 Hornbrook Farm	
Contact:	Urban Edge Environmental Consulting (UEEC)	
Issue Date:	07.05.2025	
Received Date:	24.04.2025	

GCN eDNA Analysis

Summary

When great crested newts (GCN), *Triturus cristatus*, inhabit a pond, they continuously release small amounts of their DNA into the environment. By collecting and analyzing water samples, we can detect these small traces of environmental DNA (eDNA) to confirm GCN habitation or establish GCN absence.

Results

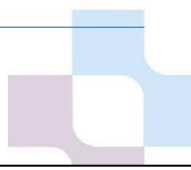
Lab ID	Site Name	OS Reference	Degradation Check	Inhibition Check	Result	Positive Replicates
GCN25 0300.	Hornbrook farm P5	TQ 19357 29594	Pass	Pass	Negative	0/12
GCN25 0301.	Hornbrook farm P2	TQ 19157 29628	Pass	Pass	Negative	0/12

Matters affecting result: none

Reported by: Chelsea Warner

Approved by: Lauryn Jewkes

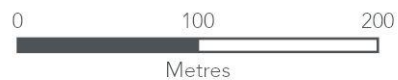
SureScreen Scientifics Ltd, Morley Retreat, Church Lane, Morley, Derbyshire, DE7 6DE, UK
+44 (0)1332 292003 | scientifics@surescreen.com | surescreenscientifics.com



Appendix V: Water Vole Survey Plan

Hornbrook Farm, Horsham, West Sussex

-  Survey area
-  Application Site
-  10m buffer
-  Extent of Horn Brook surveyed
-  Other mammal holes
-  Potential water vole burrows



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Ordnance Survey AC0000808122

Scale (at A4): 1:4,200 Created by: EM

Date: Jan 2026 Reviewed by: NP

Drawing number:

UE0470ECO-Hornbrook: Water voles: 260120



Appendix VI: Legislation and Planning Context

Legislation

General

The main legislative instruments for ecological protection in England and Wales are: the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA; as amended); Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW; as amended); Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC; as amended); the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations; as amended); and the Environment Act 2021.

WCA 1981 consolidated and amended pre-existing national wildlife legislation in order to implement the Bern Convention and the European Union Wild Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC). It complements the Habitats Regulations, offering protection to a wider range of species than the latter. The Act also provided for the designation and protection of nationally important conservation sites of value for their floral, faunal or geological features, termed Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Schedules of the act list protected species of flora and fauna, as well as invasive species, and detail the possible offences that apply to these species.

The CROW Act 2000 amended and strengthened existing wildlife legislation detailed in the WCA. It placed a duty on government departments & the National Assembly for Wales to have regard for biodiversity, provided increased powers for the protection and maintenance of SSSI, and created a right of access to parts of the countryside. The Act contained lists of habitats and species (Section 74) for which conservation measures should be promoted, in accordance with the recommendations of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio Earth Summit) 1992.

The NERC Act 2006 consolidated and replaced aspects of earlier legislation. Section 40 of the Act places a duty upon all local authorities and public bodies in England and Wales to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity in exercising all of their functions, including by restoring or enhancing habitats and species populations. Sections 41 (England) and 42 (Wales) list habitats and species of principal importance to the conservation of biodiversity (otherwise known as priority habitats/species as listed in the now superseded UK Biodiversity Action Plan). These lists supersede Section 74 of the CRoW Act 2000. These species and habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.

The Habitats Regulations 2017 are the principal means by the European Union Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) was transposed into English and Welsh law, and place a duty upon the relevant authority of government to identify sites which are of importance to the habitats and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive. Those sites which meet the criteria in Europe are designated as Sites of Community Importance by the European Commission, and subsequently identified as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) by the European Union member states. Since the UK's departure from the European Union the European Commission no longer has a role in designating SACs in the UK. The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 establish a single stage designation process, where the appropriate authority is the decision maker. The selection and designation of SACs is based on the criteria set out in Annex III of the Habitats Directive insofar as it applies to the UK, and having regard to the advice of the appropriate nature conservation body.

The 2019 Amendment Regulations have created a new national site network on land and at sea, including both the inshore and offshore marine areas in the UK. The national site network includes existing SACs, existing Special

Protection Areas (SPA) originally designated as a result of Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds, and any new SACs and SPAs designated under the 2019 Regulations. SACs and SPAs in the UK therefore no longer form part of the EU's Natura 2000 ecological network.

The Habitats Regulations also provide for the protection of individual species of fauna and flora of European conservation concern listed in Schedules 2 and 5 respectively (European Protected Species (EPS)). Schedule 2 includes species such as otter and GCN for which the UK population represents a significant proportion of the total European population. It is an offence to deliberately kill, injure, disturb or trade in these species. Schedule 5 plant species are protected from unlawful destruction, uprooting or trade under the regulations. Under the Habitats Regulations disturbance includes any activity which is likely to: impair the ability of a EPS to survive, breed, reproduce, or rear/nurture its young; impair the ability of a EPS to migrate or hibernate; or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.

The Environment Act 2021, among other things: established an Office for Environmental Protection; introduced a mandatory requirement for all new development requiring planning permission to achieve a net gain for biodiversity of at least 10% (although implementation of this is transitional); amended the NERC Act duty to conserve biodiversity by explicitly adding a duty to enhance; and requires local authorities to produce local nature recovery strategies.

GCN (*Triturus cristatus*; GCN) (and natterjack toad *Bufo calamita*)

GCN is fully protected by the WCA and the Habitats Regulations. The legislation makes it an offence, *inter alia*, to:

- ▶ Intentionally kill, injure or take a GCN (including its eggs).
- ▶ Possess or control a live or dead GCN, any part of, or anything derived from a GCN.
- ▶ Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place that a GCN uses for shelter or protection.
- ▶ Intentionally or recklessly disturb a GCN while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

Otter is fully protected by the WCA and the Habitats Regulations. The legislation makes it an offence, *inter alia*, to:

- ▶ Intentionally kill, injure or take an otter.
- ▶ Possess or control a live or dead otter, any part of, or anything derived from an otter.
- ▶ Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place that an otter uses for shelter or protection.
- ▶ Intentionally or recklessly disturb an otter while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

Water vole (*Arvicola amphibious*)

Water vole is fully protected by the WCA. The legislation makes it an offence, *inter alia*, to:

- ▶ Intentionally kill, injure or take a water vole.
- ▶ Possess or control a live or dead water vole, any part of, or anything derived from a water vole.

- ▶ Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place that a water vole uses for shelter or protection.
- ▶ Intentionally or recklessly disturb a water vole while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

Planning context

National Planning Policy Framework (Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in 2024, outlines the Government's commitment to the conservation of wildlife and natural features. It is concerned with:

- ▶ Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological conservation value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- ▶ Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
- ▶ Maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
- ▶ Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current & future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
- ▶ Preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
- ▶ Remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

The NPPF requires that local plans should “distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value...; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries”.

To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, the NPPF states that planning policies should:

- ▶ Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- ▶ Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to protect and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:

- ▶ if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- ▶ development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- ▶ development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- ▶ development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

The following wildlife sites should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- ▶ potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
- ▶ listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and
- ▶ sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site. The policies within the NPPF (and additional guidance contained within Circular 06/2005) are a material planning consideration.

UK/Local Biodiversity Action Plan Designations and Birds of Conservation Concern and Red Data Book Listings

Note that BAP designations and status as RSPB Birds of Conservation Concern or Red Data Book species does not offer any further legal protection, but planning authorities are required to prevent these species from being adversely affected by development in accordance with National Planning Policy and the CROW and NERC Acts. The United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP), first published in 1994 and updated in 2007, was a government initiative designed to implement the requirements of the Convention of Biological Diversity to conserve and enhance species and habitats. The UKBAP contained a list of priority habitats and species of conservation concern in the UK, and outlined biodiversity initiatives designed to enhance their conservation status.

However, as a result of devolution, and new country-level and international drivers and requirements, much of the work previously carried out by the UK BAP is now focussed at a country-level rather than a UK-level, and the UK BAP was succeeded by the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework' in July 2012. The UK lists of priority habitats and species

nonetheless remain an important reference source and were used to draw up statutory lists of priority habitats and species in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The priority habitats and species correlate with those listed on Section 41 and 42 of the NERC Act.

The UKBAP required that conservation of biodiversity be addressed at a County level through the production of Local BAPs. These are targeted towards species of conservation concern characteristic of each area. In addition, a number of local authorities and large organisations have produced their own BAPs. Where they exist, Local BAP targets with regard to species and habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.

Local Planning Policy

The following policies relating to wildlife and biodiversity are contained within the adopted Horsham District Planning Framework (Horsham District Council, 2015):

Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

1. Development will be supported where it can demonstrate that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Proposals that would result in the loss of existing green infrastructure will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that new opportunities will be provided that mitigates or compensates for this loss, and ensures that the ecosystem services of the area are retained.

2. Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity, and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate. The Council will support new development which retains and/or enhances significant features of nature conservation on development sites. The Council will also support development which makes a positive contribution to biodiversity through the creation of green spaces, and linkages between habitats to create local and regional ecological networks.

3. Where felling of protected trees is necessary, replacement planting with a suitable species will be required.

4. a) Particular consideration will be given to the hierarchy of sites and habitats in the district as follows:

i. Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

ii. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs)

iii. Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and any areas of Ancient woodland, local geodiversity or other irreplaceable habitats not already identified in i & ii above.

b) Where development is anticipated to have a direct or indirect adverse impact on sites or features for biodiversity, development will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that:

i. The reason for the development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and,

ii. That appropriate mitigation and compensation measures are provided.

5. Any development with the potential to impact Arun Valley SPA or the Mens SAC will be subject to a HRA to determine the need for an Appropriate Assessment. In addition, development will be required to be in accordance with the necessary mitigation measures for development set out in the HRA of this plan.

Appendix VII: Legal and Technical Limitations

- This report has been prepared by Urban Edge Environmental Consulting Ltd (UEEC Ltd) with all reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the contract made with the Client to undertake this work, and taking into account the information made available by the Client. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this report or any other services provided by us.
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- The advice provided in this report does not constitute legal advice. As such, the services of lawyers may also be considered to be warranted.
- Unless otherwise stated in this report, the assessments made assume that the sites and facilities that have been considered in this report will continue to be used for their current planned purpose without significant change.
- All work carried out in preparing this report has utilised and is based upon UEEC Ltd's current professional knowledge and understanding of current relevant UK standards and codes, technology and legislation. Changes in this legislation and guidance may occur at any time in the future and may cause any conclusions to become inappropriate or incorrect. UEEC Ltd does not accept responsibility for advising the Client or other interested parties of the facts or implications of any such changes;
- Where this report presents or relies upon the findings of ecological field surveys (including habitat, botanical or protected / notable species surveys), its conclusions should not be relied upon for longer than a maximum period of two years from the date of the original field surveys. Ecological change (e.g. colonisation of a site by a protected species) can occur rapidly and this limitation is not intended to imply that a likely absence of, for instance, a protected species will persist for any period of time;
- This report has been prepared using factual information contained in maps and documents prepared by others. No responsibility can be accepted by UEEC Ltd for the accuracy of such information;
- Every effort has been made to accurately represent the location of mapped features, however, the precise locations of features should not be relied upon;
- Populations of animals and plants are often transient in nature and a single survey visit can only provide a general indication of species present on site. Time of year when the survey was carried out, weather conditions and other variables will influence the results of an ecological survey (e.g. it is possible that some flowering plant species which flower at other times of the year were not observed). Every effort has been made to accurately note indicators of presence of protected, rare and notable species within and adjacent to the site but the possibility nonetheless exists for other species to be present which were not recorded or otherwise indicated by the survey;
- Any works undertaken as a consequence of the recommendations provided within this report should be subjected to the necessary health & safety checks and full risk assessments.

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